

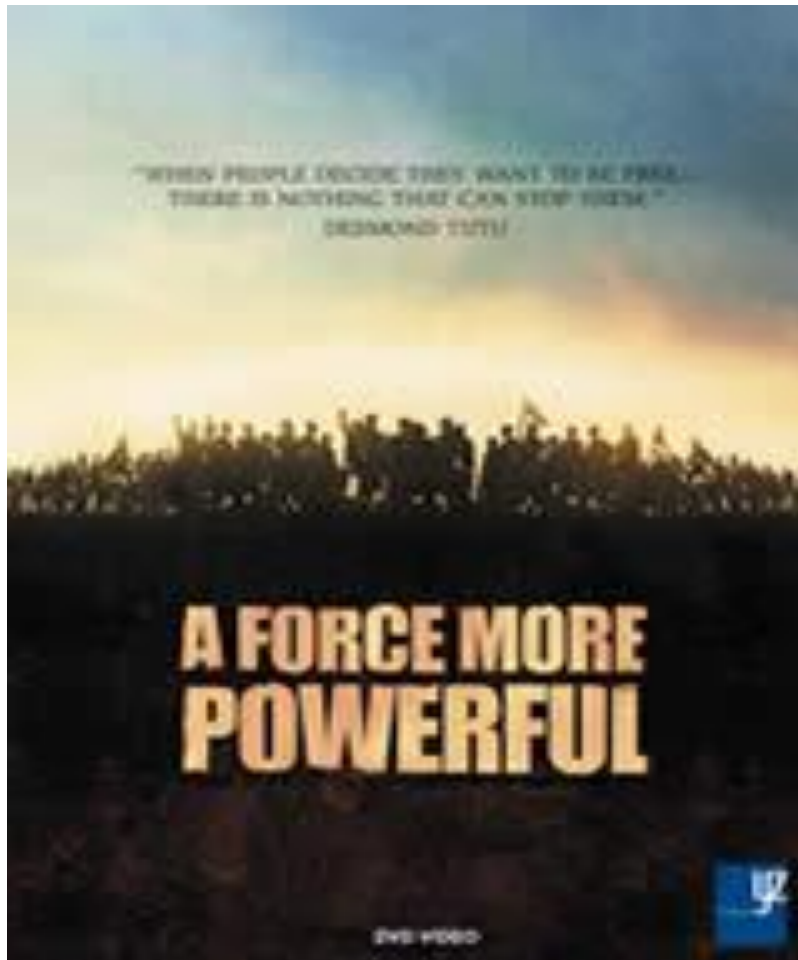
# ACC HIGHLIGHTS

**AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER – US EMBASSY COTONOU**

**PAS COTONOU**  
**JANUARY, 2011**

# January 5, 2011

## A FORCE MORE POWERFUL



This movie was shown in preparation to the celebration of Martin Luther King day and in honor of his legacy of Non-Violence. An audience of 72 people took part in this activity which aims at promoting the English language by offering learners and educators a space for practicing, and promoting peace and development through non violence . The movie was followed by an interactive discussion led by the PAO Rhonda J. Watson and Educational Advisor, Ulrich Demagbo.

A Force More Powerful (2 X 84 min) explores how entire societies were transformed, suddenly or gradually, as nonviolent resistance destroyed the repressor's ability to control events.

# January 13, 2011

## US MAJOR GENERAL DAVID HOGG'S VISIT TO BENIN



PAS Cotonou covered the visit of US Major General David Hogg to the Headquarters of the Beninese Army. PAO, Rhonda J. Watson accompany Ambassador James Knight and the Mission team to the event.

The significance of the visit lies in the fact that it strengthens the military cooperation between the U.S. and Benin



# January 19, 2011

## CELEBRATING MLK DAY



PAS Cotonou held a conference where the movie, "King: a Man of Peace in a Time of War" was shown, followed by a conference-debate on the theme: "Is the heritage of Non-Violence of MLK relevant to Democracy in Africa?".

The aim was to celebrate MLK Day, to engage Officers of the Beninese Army and members of the general public and civil society, and to demonstrate the commitment of the American Mission in helping to organize peaceful elections and sensitize the public to their rights and obligations



In front of an audience of 200 participants, Colonel Robert Sewade spoke on the subject of Non-Violence and the position of the Beninese Army in regard to this subject. He encouraged the audience to always pursue peace instead of violence.

# January 20, 2011

## TRAINING OF SPEECH CONTEST CANDIDATES



PAO, Rhonda J. Watson organized a toast master training for contestants selected for the “Dream or Prophecy” speech contest. This training was designed to help the contestants learn in a practical manner the do’s and don’t of delivering a speech in front of the public. It was also an opportunity for each contestant to become familiar with the podium where the contest will take place.

# January 24, 2011

## DIGITAL VIDEO CONFERENCE (DVC) ON “EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING”



This activity was chosen to train Mission staff and the general public on how to deliver a speech to a large public with self-confidence and eloquence.

An audience of 50 people followed attentively as Robert Bradford spoke of the various techniques and tools to use in order to be effective in a public speaking context.



**January 26, 2011**

## SEMI-FINALS OF "DREAM OR PROPHECY" SPEECH CONTEST



As a follow-up to the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, PAS Cotonou hosted the semi-finals of the "DREAM or PROPHECY" Speech Contest initiative that was launched on December 15, 2010. Nine candidates successively executed their speeches in English in front of a rapt audience of 235 people . They were followed by six candidates who performed their speeches in French.



The event was the first of this kind in which candidates were invited to express their own visions and dreams rather than mimic the memorized "I Have a Dream" speech. Yet another innovation was to permit and encourage the public to evaluate each candidate and cast their vote, which would be considered in the jury's final vote tally. In the end three candidates from each category were selected to go into the finals.

**January 27, 2011**

# INAUGURATION OF A US EMBASSY-FUNDED FOOT-BRIDGE IN SO-TCHANHOU VILLAGE



PAS Cotonou coordinated the media coverage of the inauguration ceremony of the new U.S. Embassy funded foot-bridge in the lake village of So-Tchanhou, in the Southern part of Benin

The people of the lake village of So-Tchanhou are isolated and find it extremely difficult to move around. Thus, the Embassy's Self-Help project decided to fund the construction of this infrastructure to make life easier for them and to enable school children to move from one side of the bank to another.

**PAS COTONOU**  
**FEBRUARY, 2011**



# February 2nd, 2011

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH FOR PUPILS



PAS Cotonou started the celebration of Black History Month 2011, by engaging 9 to 16 years old school children in a movie discussion titled “The Life and Legend of Sojourner Truth”. This detailed documentary traces the lifelong odyssey of a woman who literally walked out of bondage, changed her name in 1843, and traveled the country as an abolitionist and women’s rights advocate.



The interactive discussion with the PAO revealed that, it was the first time for many pupils including their teachers to hear of Sojourner Truth. Through this PAS program, the children could learn another facet of the African-American history, and especially they could discover another key historical leader besides Doctor Martin Luther King Junior.

**February 08th, 2011**

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH: BOOK LAUNCHING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA



During PAS Cotonou held a book launch entitled, "Et pourquoi l'Afrique refuserait-elle le développement?" (And why would Africa refuse to be developed?) by Beninese author Professor Noel Dossou-Yovo. This was a direct response to another book "Et si l'Afrique refusait le développement?" (What if Africa Refuses to develop?), written by a Cameroonian author, Axelle Kabou.

During the celebration of African American History Month, it was an opportunity for Post to demonstrate the commitment of the American Government for the development of Africa and the promotion of American values such as Good Governance, Democracy and Freedom. The event helped to focus attention on the history of governance in Africa and the various approaches of solutions for Africa to develop.



# February 11, 2011

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH: VERNISSAGE “ILE YAH” (RETURN HOME)



After the school children, it was the turn of diplomats, Benin government officials, artists, NGO leaders, key resource people, to come to the American Cultural Center and celebrate the history of African-American.



This was a special way through which a team of five artists wanted to highlight their support for the African-American community. Lots of renditions of Martin Luther King, President Barack Obama, the Jazz music, and the mystery of the long years of suffering of the African-American were all on display. There were also handmade pearls to highlight the beauty of the African-American Woman.



# February 11, 2011

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH: MUSIC CONCERT



At this musical show, a dance and musical performance depicting slavery and a vision of hope was performed by a French-Beninese dance group called Generation Gogohoun. They recounted the story of slaves taken by force from Africa to America and their journey until freedom came.



A Gospel Concert also took place and was animated by a group called "Ike David & The Generation of Praise." They performed various songs written by African-American singers such as Aretha Franklin. They gave a very moving performance that stirred the crowd to their feet.



PAS Cotonou wanted to ensure that Benin citizens understand this part of the U.S. history in a way that uses a cultural performance to deliver the message.



# February 11, 2011

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH: THE FINALS OF “DREAM OR PROPHECY” SPEECH CONTEST



On February 11, 2011 PAS Cotonou held the Grand Finale of the speech context entitled "Dream or Prophecy." Three candidates delivered their speeches in English and the other three in French, sharing their visions and dreams for Benin and for Africa. This was an opportunity for all to see the talent of the next generation of young leaders.

The speech contest was organized in honor of Martin Luther King celebration, which was held in January. Post chose to do the final in the month of February in order to fit the celebration of Black History Month. This was done with the purpose of raising the profile of the grand finale, as well as creating awareness on Black History Month.

# February 11, 2011

## FABRIC WEAVING WORKSHOP AT PAS



With a view to assisting the government of Benin in its effort to resolve the issue of youth unemployment, PAS Cotonou initiated a fabric weaving workshop designed to foster a spirit of entrepreneurship in the young University graduates in search for job.

By owning a weaving machine and hiring weavers, an individual can create his own enterprise.

This activity is significant because it aims at teaching the youth that the best way to find a job today is to create one, instead of relying on the government to provide employment.





# February 16, 2011

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH: MOVIE NIGHT “THE TUSKEEGEE AIRMEN”



PAS Cotonou showed a movie "The Tuskegee Airmen" recounting the story of the first squadron of African-American pilots that fought in the Air Force. It was a moving and an inspiring night for many of the participants who learned another facet of the history of African-Americans.



PAS Cotonou strategically chose this movie in the series of three movies to educate the Beninese public about various parts of the history of African-American. This movie night was an opportunity to continue the awareness campaign about the celebration of Black History Month, as well as teaching American History to the Benin public.

# February 16, 2011

## WEB TRAINING WITH NGO AFRICA TIC



PAS Cotonou conducted a web training session to members of NGO Africa TIC on Wednesday, February 16, 2011. This was preceded by the screening of the documentary "America Beyond the Color Line."



This training session was the opportunity to introduce participants to online tools for information retrieval. Web directories, search engines, databases, blogs were among topics covered. All participants submitted the request for registration as IRC members. The film screening focused on the importance of education, training in empowering people.

# February 23, 2011

## WORKSHOP ON ONLINE RESOURCES FOR ENGLISH TEACHING



On February 23, 2011, IRCD Bienvenu Akodigna conducted a workshop on online resources for English teaching. This was an opportunity to introduce 50 English Teachers to Internet, electronic mail, newsgroups, web searching and social media tools.

English teachers are educators and, as such, they can serve as multiplier of impact. They can help PD reach out to more young people. Empowering them is strategic for the Mission.



**February 23, 2011**

## AMBASSADOR MET WITH ENGLISH CLUBS AT AMERICAN CORNER PARAKOU

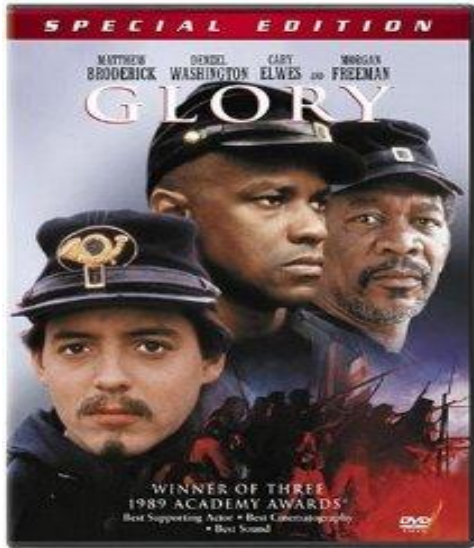


PAS Cotonou covered a trip to the northern part of Benin by Ambassador and Mrs. James Knight, PAO Rhonda Watson and Consular Officer Richard Kolker. The US officials talked with English club members at the American Corner in Parakou.

This event had two purposes: to encourage English learners and grant them the opportunity to network with high ranking Officers from the Embassy. It was also an opportunity to reach out to young people in Parakou.

# February 25, 2011

## MOVIE NIGHT – GLORY



This was the last in a series of three movies viewings organized by PAS Cotonou in the framework of the celebration of Black History Month. The Tuskegee Airmen 332nd Fighter Group were the first African American military aviators in the United States armed forces. Despite many racial adversities, they trained and flew with distinction.



This film was selected to match this year theme, the contribution of African Americans during the Civil War. Participants were impressed by the courage of the black regiment. "The lesson I learned from this is that they fought for their freedom and they were not discouraged by the death of the commander," remarked one of the attendees.



**February 24, 2011**

# INAUGURATION OF A US EMBASSY FUNDED TRAINING CENTER FOR YOUNG GIRLS AND WOMEN



PD coordinated and supervised the inauguration ceremony of a US Embassy funded training center for young girls and women.

This activity was significant in the sense that the publication of the press release was the only way the Embassy was able to inform a larger public about the creation of such a training center and what it stood for.



**February 28, 2011**

# DVC ON POWERFUL PERSUASIVE SPEAKING



PAS Cotonou organized in cooperation with ARS Paris a Digital Video Conference on the theme of Persuasive Speaking with Robert Bradford. A series of questions and answers followed with many participants wanting to know more. The highlight of the conference came in the follow-up discussion with PAO, Rhonda J. Watson who initiated a practice exercise, helping the audience to put the theory which they have just learned into action. Participants commented favorably on the practical review exercises she implemented to reinforce the DVC message.

One of the goal of the American Mission in Cotonou is to promote Education. PAS Cotonou has been carrying this vision out through education and personal development programs. The DVC on powerful persuasion was the second one in a series of two conferences designed to teach Benin citizens especially, young students and professionals, how to communicate and speak in public.

**PAS COTONOU**  
**MARCH, 2011**

# March 04th, 2011

## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH & PEACE CORPS 50TH ANNIVERSARY



PD hosted a concert featuring female guitarist, Leni Stern, a Beninese jazz group, and children who attended a two-week music and dance workshop taught by Leni Stern.

PD's goal in hosting this concert was three-fold: to recognize Women's History month; to mark the Peace Corp's 50th anniversary and to promote music education with the cooperation with the Center of the International Arts and Music Center of Ouidah (CIAMO) that was created and funded by an American philanthropist, Sarah Dupont.

The Minister of Culture attended the event and gave a speech congratulating the U.S. Embassy and the American Cultural Center for this initiative.



**March 09th, 2011**

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH CONFERENCE BY DCM, PAO, AND BENINESE SPEECH CONTEST WINNER



PAS Cotonou held a conference with the Deputy Chief of Mission, Susan Tuller, Public Affairs Officer, Rhonda J. Watson, and the winner of the speech contest "Dream or Prophecy" French category, Joannie Bewa serving as speakers.

The three panelists focused on Women's Empowerment and how women can fulfill their destiny regardless of obstacles such as societal restrictions against women pursuing non-traditional professions, stereotypes - especially here in Africa, challenges in terms of unequal opportunities, motherhood, etc.



**March 09th, 2011**

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH CONFERENCE BY THE PRESIDENT OF "WOMAN POWER"



PAS Cotonou hosted a conference on the theme "Women, Unleash The Power Within for a Successful Life and a Peaceful World".

Ms. Wilhelmine Noudofinin, President of a non-governmental organization named "WOMAN POWER" exhorted women to wake up and stand for their capacities. She emphasized that it is not about challenging men, BUT becoming the best of themselves in their professional, social, as well as personal life. The PAO and the GSO shared their life experience and their positive thoughts.

The conference ended with a showing of the film "The Secret" to explain to the audience how they can determine their destiny by the thoughts they entertain and the vision they develop for their lives.



# March 14, 2011

## ENGLISH SPEAKERS MET WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG



PAS Cotonou invited Thione Niang, an IIP speaker from America to give a series of conferences on the topic of “Leadership and Youth Empowerment”. The first conference was held with English Teachers and English club members on Monday, March 14, 2011.

An audience of senior students from various schools, university students, English teachers and the general public listened to Niang sharing his life story, and admonishing them on the importance of learning English, believing in oneself, dreaming big, and working hard to achieve one’s dreams.

He encouraged the youth to develop their leadership skills by getting involved in improving their communities. He suggested that they should be willing to sacrifice to pursue their ideals.



**March 14, 2011**

## **YOUNG NGO LEADERS MET WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG**



In the second conference that he held on Monday, March 14, 2011 in the American Cultural Center, Thione Niang admonished an audience of young NGO leaders to never give up in the face of obstacles and not to let anyone tell them that they cannot make it, rather, they must persist to achieve their vision. He noted that it was not necessary to go to the U.S. to achieve greatness, that they should put their talents to work in Africa.



When queried about ways to stop the “brain drain,” Niang responded that Africans needed to hold their leaders accountable to stop corruption in order to create the kind of environment that would inspire the Diaspora to return to Africa. Niang cited the example of the youth in Egypt and Tunisia who, tired of bad government and corruption, played a key role in changing the system.

**March 14, 2011**

# **RADIO INTERVIEW ON THIONE NIANG'S MOTIVATION VISIT TO BENIN. HOSTS: ATLANTIC FM & RADIO BENIN**



PD Cotonou requested IIP speaker Thione Niang's to brief via radio interview the youth and Beninese women's associations on the topic of Leadership and Youth Empowerment.

This interview was initiated to relay Niang's message that quickly attracted an interactive participation. Atlantic FM covers 2/3 of the country. As a result, over 5 million Beninese received Niang's message that was delivered from the capital city of Cotonou. Radio Benin covers the entire country. As a result, Niang's message was received by over 6 million Beninese that would not have been informed otherwise.



**March 15, 2011**

# YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS & POLITICIANS MEET WITH IIP SPEAKER, THIONE NIANG



At this conference held at the 1,000-seat auditorium at the Palais des Congres and co-hosted with the Tuesday Dream Entrepreneurs Club, the PAO set the stage for the IIP speaker, Niang, by emphasizing the importance of persevering in the face of inevitable adversities.

Citing the example of the twenty-nine years of failures and setbacks endured by Abraham Lincoln, the PAO exhorted an audience of young entrepreneurs, politicians and university students to persist and overcome their challenges.



Thione Niang encouraged the audience to take action to correct the problems they confront in their lives or in their community rather than simply complain. Niang told them that leaders do not quit and leaders always look for ways to take the community or the organization forward.



**March 15, 2011**

# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND IN BUSINESS MET WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG



Thione Niang met with women entrepreneurs in the Conference Room of the Chamber of Commerce and of Industry of Benin (CCIB), on Tuesday, March 15, 2011. This conference was attended by the Minister of Microfinance and Youth and Women's Employment and was organized in partnership with the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs and Women in Business (FEFA). The PAO gave an impassioned speech encouraging women to rise up and use the power that lies dormant within to achieve their greatest potential.



IIP speaker, Thione Niang spoke about the important role that his own mother played in his personal motivation and success. He spoke of the abuse she suffered and how he was motivated to excel in order to take her out of that misery. He also told them that poverty and setbacks should not impede them from success and that women can influence the education and personal development of their children and husbands, and they should develop their own entrepreneurial talents.

**March 15, 2011**

# TV INTERVIEW WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG MOTIVATION TRIP TO BENIN



This interview was granted by the privately-owned and most prominent TV station in Cotonou, Golfe Television, because the TV station wanted to promote Niang's message to youth and women. Golfe TV is now on satellite; as a result, young men and women's associations across the country received the substance of Niang's message which is, the future of Africa lies in the hands of Africans. So, do not wait for others to build Africa for you. You must bring your contribution now.



**March 15, 2011**

## DINNER WITH MINISTER OF MICROFINANCE AND EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN & YOUNG PEOPLE



This private dinner was organized for the purpose of maintaining the very good relationship that exists between PAS Cotonou and the Ministry of Microfinance, and their two leaders. The minister is active in the area of women and youth empowerment, which is an MSP goal for PAS Cotonou.

PAO Rhonda J. Watson and Program Support Specialist Romaric Mouftaou attended the dinner with Benin Government minister, Mrs. Reckya Madougou. Other key people, such as IIP speaker Thione Niang, Senior Advisor to the President of Benin, Mr. Eric Adja and some young leaders were also present. Attendees stated that "Benin should take inspiration from the U.S. culture of Entrepreneurship, and youth involvement in politics," etc.



# March 16, 2011

## TV INTERVIEW AT TV CARREFOUR



On March 16, 2011, IIP speaker Thione Niang had an interview with Mr. Jean-Louis Kangbeto, Chief Editor of TV CARREFOUR. This is a privately-owned and prominent TV station in Bohicon. Niang used this opportunity to sensitize young people on the important role that they have to play in the development of their country. He emphasized that youth must take responsibility for forging their own future and cannot wait on others to give them a hand-out. This activity was held in the framework of promoting leadership, democracy, ethics and education among young people.

# March 16, 2011

## NATTINGOU: YOUNG TEACHERS IN TRAINING MET WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG



At a conference held in the teachers' school of Natitingou (ENS), Niang met with an audience of young teachers in training, entrepreneurs, and young politicians of Natitingou. He recounted his story and encouraged them to aim for the highest achievement. He reminded the audience the important role that teachers have to play in empowering their students to achieve greatness.



PAS Cotonou held this activity for the purpose of engaging young people and women in positive activities and personal development, promoting the importance of Education and the English language, fostering Beninese understanding of U.S. values of Entrepreneurship, Community Organizing and Volunteering, Democracy, Good Governance, the pursuit of one's own dreams, the mindset of never being deterred by difficulties or obstacles in the pursuit of one's goals.



# March 16, 2011

## GIRLS MILITARY SCHOOL STUDENTS MET WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG



On Wednesday, March 16, 2011, IIP speaker Thione Niang animated a conference at the Girls' Military School of Natitingou, which is located in the North of Benin. By way of introduction, the PAO focused on the fact that the girls attending this school had already been selected based on high academic credentials, and she encouraged them to believe in their talents and aspire to become the next president of Benin. Niang then spoke about the importance of dreaming big and pursuing their dreams. The girls were thrilled with the presentations and clamored to get autographs and photos with him. Many of them are Facebook users and they wasted no time in reaching out to touch Niang via Facebook.





# March 16, 2011

## GHANA-TOGO-BENIN OUTREACH VISIT OF PARK UNIVERSITY



From March 16 to 17, 2011, PAS Cotonou welcomed Michael AIDOO, International Program Advisor of Park University, Missouri, USA. Presentations were given both by the host and the Education USA Advisor at the American Cultural Center from 09:00-12:00 on Wednesday, March 16 and in three other institutions: English International School on Wednesday 16, Ecole Supérieure des Télécommunications du Bénin on the same day, and the American International School on Thursday, March 17, 2011.

Initiated by Park university, an accredited institution partnering with Education USA, this outreach visit aims at informing Beninese students of possibilities to further their studies in the US as well as particularly advantageous conditions offered by Park University to ease international students' admission to their school.



**March 17, 2011**

# FROM ABUSED TO INSPIRED: YOUNG GIRLS MET WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG



IIP speaker, Thione Niang held a conference at the Center of Arts and Crafts of Women of Parakou. Niang recounted his life story of growing up as one of 28 children in a polygamous family. At the age of 12, when he brandished a knife to challenge his father to stop beating his mother, Niang was banished from the family home and sent to live far away with his grandfather. Drawing from his own background of poverty and an estranged relationship with his father, Niang told an audience of abused girls and women that a painful past could be the motivation they need to inspire them to aim for a more positive future.



# March 17, 2011

## HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS MEET WITH IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG



Thione Niang held a conference at a Girls High School in Parakou. With an audience of school girls from rural families, Thione Niang focused on the fact that the girls attending this school had already been selected based on high academic credentials, and he encouraged them to believe in their talents and aspire to become the next president of Benin. He also admonished them about the importance of learning English, believing in oneself, dreaming big, working hard to achieve one's dreams, and not letting poverty and setbacks impede them from achieving great success.





**March 17, 2011**

# IIP SPEAKER THIONE NIANG ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARAKOU



At his conference on the campus of the university of Parakou, held in partnership with the Junior Chamber International (JCI Benin), Thione Niang met with students, young entrepreneurs and politicians and stressed the necessity of being proactive to create their own paths. The PAO was asked to speak specifically to the women in the audience and she encouraged them to take an active role in society and not to be afraid to determine what they really want to do with their lives and dare to pursue their dreams. Afterwards, the PAO and Niang were surrounded with crowds wanting to get specific advice on how to believe in themselves.



**March 18, 2011**

# BLIND AND VISUALLY-IMPAIRED YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN MEET WITH THIONE NIANG



Thione Niang met with an audience of blind and visually-impaired young men and women from a school for the blind. He congratulated them for the amazing results that they have achieved by matching the grade point average of students from other schools and told them how education will help them go far. Citing the example of the governor of New York, who is blind, Niang said that they should not limit their dreams, but believe instead that they can be mayors, doctors, lawyers, and even presidents. The PAO pointed out the example of the internationally-recognized musician, Stevie Wonder, but none of the students had ever even heard of him. She emphasized that vision for one's life goals comes from the heart, not from the eyes, and encouraged them to develop their talents and follow their heart.



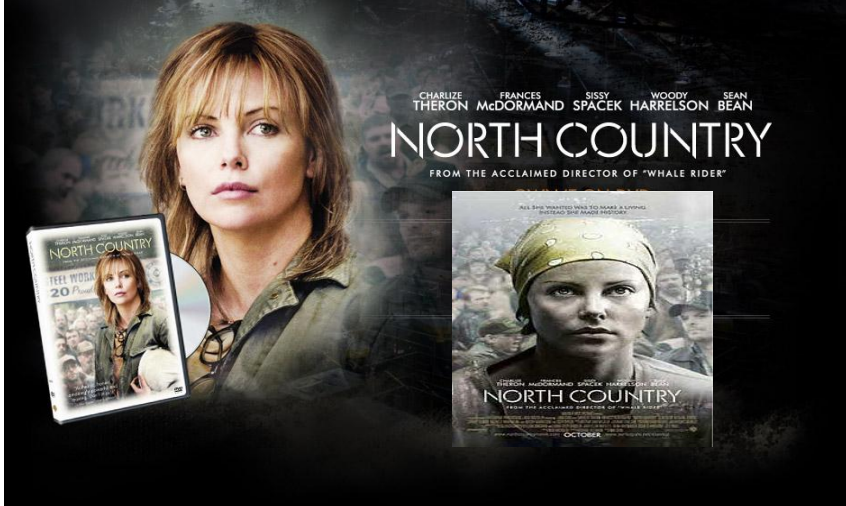
# March 23, 2011

## SHOWING OF THE FILM TITLED "NORTH COUNTRY"



Post chose to show this film within the framework of the Mission Strategic Plan of celebrating women history month, as well as engaging youth to fight sexual harassment and sensitizing the public on the evil effects of this sad practice.

North Country was inspired by the 2002 book Class Action "The Story of Lois Jenson and the Landmark Case That Changed Sexual Harassment Law" by Clara Bingham and Laura Leedy Gansler, which chronicled the case of Jenson v. Eveleth Taconite Company.



The movie spurred many of the participants present to engage in positive activities that can make a difference in their communities.



**March 23, 2011**

## **ELECTIVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF BENIN'S ENGLISH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**



On March 23, 2011, English teachers of Benin held the Elective General Assembly that established Benin's National English Teachers' Association. 78 English teachers met at the Outdoor Theater of the ACC to elect 9 members of the Executive Board and 3 members of the Control Committee.



The birth of this association came from the various programs and initiatives organized by PAS Cotonou to advance the English language in Benin.

This elective general assembly was held to elect officers to lead the English Teachers' Association so that it can represent English teachers of Benin and coordinate different activities organized by English teachers at the national level.

# **March 28 to April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011**

## **IRO MYRA BROWN'S VISIT TO BENIN**



IRO Myra Brown visited Benin from March 28 to April 1st, 2011. During her visit, she gave presentations on social media at the University of Abomey-Calavi, the Ministry in charge of gender development, and at the America Corner of Porto-Novo.

These presentations were an opportunity for PD to contribute in empowering women, young students and the public at large. This will increase Internet use as people will improve their skills.

**March 30, 2011**

## WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL MEDIA AT THE AMERICAN CORNER PORTO-NOVO



During IRO Myra Brown's visit, she conducted a workshop on Social media, with an audience of Librarians and information professionals at the American Corner of Porto-Novo as a result of their request for a follow up to the training the IRO gave them in June 2010.

A participant during the Q&A session



# March 31, 2011

## BOOK DISCUSSION TO ROUND UP WOMEN HISTORY MONTH



PD hosted this book discussion to conclude its activities in honor of Women History Month and as part of its outreach activities to sensitize people about the issues related to human trafficking and gender based violence.

The discussion, led by Mrs. Adelaide Fassinou Allagbada, Technical Adviser at the Ministry of Micro Finance, Youth and Women Employment, gave participants an opportunity to learn about various forms of violence against women through the presentation of ARS Nouveaux Horizons title, “La Moitié du Ciel” (Half Sky).

The book is about the stories of real women who went through atrocities, yet their desire to survive has helped them through and their courage and determination has got them involved in positive activities that are making the difference today in their communities.

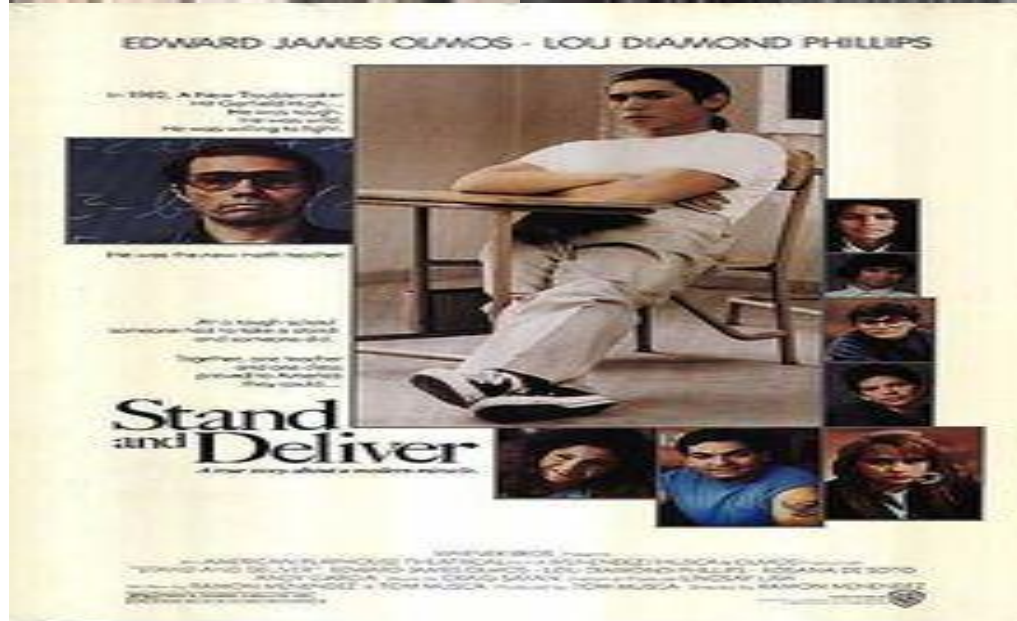
**PAS COTONOU**  
**APRIL, 2011**

# April 20th, 2011

# MOVIE NIGHT – STAND & DELIVER



In the framework of the celebration of National Library Week and in line with Mission strategic goals of promoting Education, PD showed the movie “Stand and Deliver” in order to encourage young Beninese students and leaders to pursue Education and to make extensive use of the Library resources.



The film “Stand and Deliver” is a 1988 dramatization based on a true story of a dedicated high school mathematics teacher Jaime Escalante who inspires his dropout prone students to learn calculus to build up their self-esteem and do so well that they are accused of cheating.

The story impacted the participants who could see that anything is possible with hard work and faith.



# April 21st, 2011

## BOOK DISCUSSION ON “L’ART D’APPRENDRE”



On April 21, 2011, PAS Cotonou hosted a book discussion at the American Cultural Center (ACC) Information Resource Center (IRC). The discussion, led by Professor Abraham Voglozin, Lecturer at the University of Abomey-Calavi, and based on the ARS Nouveaux Horizons title “L’Art d’apprendre” (The Art of Learning), introduced participants to a variety of skills and attitudes that encompasses the process of learning.



This is a regular activity of IRC Cotonou and helps promote IRC products and resources. This event helped also clarifying many things about the learning process.

# April 26th, 2011

## PD AT YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS' CAREER FAIR



On Friday, April 26, 2011 at The Palais des Congres (Cotonou), the EducationUSA Advising Center took part in a career fair entitled "Forum Talents".

The PAO welcomed this initiative of Esperanza Higher Education partner institution to give the EducationUSA Advising Center one more opportunity to reach out to young Beninese so that they can learn about the different opportunities they are provided by the USG and American higher education institutions to further their education in the US and interact with the US culture.



Many parents and students welcomed such an opportunity given to them to receive trustworthy information about studying in the USA.



# April 27th, 2011

## MEDIA WORKSHOP : Book Discussion on “the Power of MEDIA” & DVC on “21<sup>st</sup> Century Media: New Frontiers , New barriers”



On Wednesday, April 27, 2011, PAS Cotonou held a media workshop with seventy men and women of the TV, Radio and Printed media in Benin.

To begin, Mr. Jean Jonas Tossa, Director of Atlantic FM and Benin IVLP Alumnus led a book discussion on “The Power of Media” by Michael Schudson. He inspired many of his peers to go beyond the traditional information giving role and become information or truth seekers.



Secondly, there was a DVC on the theme “21<sup>st</sup> Century Media: New Frontiers , New barriers” animated by Elisabeth Bryant, an American journalist based in Paris.



# April 28th, 2011

## PD WELCOME CHILDREN OF MISSION STAFF



On Thursday, April 28, 2011, PAS Cotonou was proud to host the children of the personnel of the American Mission in Benin.

As expected, there was a lot of joy, cheering, noise, dancing, learning, food, drinks, and playing.



Ambassador Knight and his wife, DCM Susan Tuller and PAO Rhonda J. Watson interacted with the children, helping them to discover the work place of their parents.

**April 29th, 2011**

# AV TECHNICIAN RETIREMENT CEREMONY & HAPPY HOUR AT PD



On Friday, April 29, 2011, PAS Cotonou celebrated the retirement ceremony of AV Technician, Jean Agossouhoui.

It was also the opportunity to host for the first time the Mission Happy Hour.

There were lots of fun, food, drinks, music, etc.





# April 29th, 2011

## CELEBRATING JAZZ APPRECIATION MONTH AT SAFARI BANTOU



On April 29, 2011, starting at 21:15, PAS Cotonou hosted a JAZZ Night in commemoration of the 10th Annual Jazz Appreciation month. During the program held at a Club called Safari Bantou, Episode 10 of Jazz by Ken Burns series entitled "A Masterpiece by Midnight" was shown to an enthusiastic public, and a discussion followed thereafter.

Ambassador James Knight and his wife honored the event by their presence. The terrific music band of the Club took over at 23:30 with live interpretation of Jazz Legends. The guests, despite the late hour, stayed to participate in the night of Jazz.



**PAS COTONOU**  
**MAY, 2011**

**May 02<sup>nd</sup>, 2011**

# BOOK DONATION AT SECONDARY SCHOOL IN POBÈ, A CITY IN WEST BENIN



On May 2, 2011, Roxane Bapuuroh, the PAS Cultural Affairs Assistant traveled to Pobè (about 110 kilometers off to the central-eastern region) to the Catholic Secondary School Sainte Claire of Pobè, celebrating the tenth anniversary of its creation. About twenty students competed for three prestigious places in an "English Spelling Bee" contest.

Focusing on promoting the English language by encouraging such competitions in schools, PAS Cotonou gave eight Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary to the best eight students,. The activity relates to Post's goals for sharing common visions and promoting basic education.

**May 06<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# MUSICAL CONCERT AND DIALOGUE WITH YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS -DWYAL



On May 6, 2011, five hundred university students, community organizers, and young professionals participated in a musical concert and a dialogue on the theme: "Young People contributing to sustainable development."

This event was organized to provide a platform for many young Beninese leaders to showcase their efforts on the ground and to discuss the future of the country and the continent.



# May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE NIGHT SURVIVORS' GUIDE: FORCED LABOR & ILLICIT



In the framework of the Mission strategic goal of sensitizing the Beninese on human rights issues, PAS Cotonou showed two documentaries “Survivors’ Guide: Forced Labor” and “Illicit: The Dark Trade”.

The first documentary talked about the personal story of a girl from Moldova who was tricked into being a sex slave in western Europe. The second explored the shadowy world of illicit trade, where dangerous multi-billion dollar criminal networks threaten whole sectors of the global economy.

**May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# BOOK DISCUSSION ON “LE CHEMIN PARCOURU: MÉMOIRES D’UN ENFANT SOLDAT” BY ISHMAEL BEAH



On May 25, 2011, PAS Cotonou hosted a book discussion at the American Cultural Center (ACC) animated by Mr. Olivier Adjai, Social Services Specialist at NGO Terre des Hommes.

The book from ARS Nouveaux Horizons is entitled “Le Chemin Parcouru: Mémoires d’un enfant soldat” (A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier), and is written by Ishmael Beah. It is the vivid story of one of the 300,000 child soldiers, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s, in more than fifty conflicts around the world.



The participants were sensitized to cultivate peace and work to avoid an occurrence of such atrocity in Benin.



# May 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011

## IRC PROGRAM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: “SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION”



On May 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> and on June, 08<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the Information Resource Centre (IRC) took a program to the students as opposed to the usual invitations to visiting the IRC Library.

The program named “Réussir facilement ses études” (Successful Education) aimed to sensitize students on how to succeed in their education and to train them in IT & Internet skills, and the learning of the English language. The ultimate goal was to encourage them to register in order to use the ACC Library resources.

CEG Ste Rita, CEG Vedoko and CEG Zogbo were the secondary schools visited with more than three hundred students registering for the program.



**PAS COTONOU**  
**JUNE, 2011**

# June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE NIGHT – FREEDOM WRITERS



On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, Acting PAO Mackenzie Rowe led the discussions during the interactive debate over the true life story of Erin Gruwell, a teacher who led a group of supposedly “unteachable” teens to discover the power of tolerance, reclaim their shattered lives and change their world. Participants regularly attending the movie night series, judged this movie as the best of all the movie shown in the series.





**June 03<sup>rd</sup> to 04<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## **PAS COTONOU COVERED THE VISIT OF SENATORS JOHNNY ISAAKSON AND CHRISTOPHER COONS**



From June 3-4, 2011, PAS Cotonou covered the visit of a delegation from the American Senate. The delegation was comprised of Senator Johnny Isakson, Senator Christopher Coons, Mrs. Annie Coons, Mr. Chris Sullivan, Ms. Joan Kirchner, Mrs. Christy Gleason, and Major Ryan Levesque.

The delegation met with President Boni Yayi and three ministers (Justice, Health and Foreign Affairs). They visited a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer site in the village of Zè, a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored malaria prevention and treatment program at a local hospital, and a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) sponsored rehabilitation and security project at the Port of Cotonou.





**June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# PAO ADDRESSES WOMEN ECOLOGISTS



In the framework of the Mission strategic goal of sensitizing the Beninese on Women Empowerment issues, the PAO Rhonda J. Watson delivered a speech to an audience of 30 women ecologist from the NGO called BENIN NATURE. She shared practical success stories on civic engagement by women in the USA, such as the National Women Suffrage Association.



The highlight of the event came when the PAO shared the true life story of Oprah Winfrey. Many women felt uplifted and empowered at hearing such a story. The event finished with the showing of the movie entitled "Freedom writers," showcasing how a woman changed a school in the community against the odds.



# June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

## BOOK DISCUSSION ON “JE VEUX LE CHANGEMENT” BY JEROME CARLOS



On June 22, 2011, PAS Cotonou hosted a book discussion at the American Cultural Center (ACC) animated by Jerome Carlos, author of the book and Director of Radio CAPPE FM.

The book is based on the idea that change does not come from outside, but from inside. People should not wait for change like they wait for a bus. They should, instead, make things happen, starting with themselves. The speaker has encouraged the audience to learn to live by the principles of a positive mindset.

He gave his personal testimony that over the past 41 years that he never allowed himself to express anger or speak negative words.



# June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## PD TEAM PREPARES THE DECORATION FOR THE JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATIONS



On June 30, 2011, PAO Rhonda J. Watson led the personnel of the Public Diplomacy Section to the Chief of Mission Residence (CMR) to undertake the task of decorating the grounds assigned to PD. The Public Diplomacy Section was in charge of decorating Zone A.

With the PAO's iPod loaded with music and a portable speaker, the team worked tirelessly with creativity. The result was an amazing set of tents and backdrops decorated at the colors of the American flags.



**PAS COTONOU**  
**JULY, 2011**



**July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011**

# US EMBASSY COTONOU CELEBRATES THE JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> CEREMONY AT THE CMR



On the evening of Friday July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, US Embassy Cotonou celebrated the 235<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the USA National Day. The Beninese Government authorities honored the event with their presence and their spokesperson, Mr. Max Ahouèkè, Minister of Information and Communication, transmitted the message of congratulations from Benin President Yayi Boni. It was an opportunity for government authorities from both countries to highlight the progress achieved in the bilateral cooperation.

The celebrations carried on with the cutting of the cake, dancing, music, food and drinks and everyone mingling together.



# July 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## IRC COTONOU INITIATES A NEW ACTIVITY: THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS WORKSHOP



On July 6<sup>th</sup>, the Information Resource Center started a program with secondary schools students. The program called “Secondary Schools Workshop” takes place every Wednesday and Thursday until the end of September.

During the workshop, the students are shown how to use the computer and Internet, the library and the English language. In the morning sessions, they are taught how to use the resources available online to conduct research related to their studies. They are also shown how to use the facilities of the Kennedy-King Library of the American Cultural Center in order to improve academic success.



In the afternoons, they take English lessons to improve their level of use of the English language.

# July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## HIV AIDS: RED RIBBON CAMPAIGN



On December 1st, 2010 PAS Cotonou organized the HIV AIDS "Red Ribbon March" in collaboration with USAID, Peace Corps and 20 associations of young people. The leaders of the various associations that participated at that event pledged to follow the example set by USAID by taking concrete actions to help fight HIV AIDS in Benin.

It was with that promise that they began the RED RIBBON CAMPAIGN with a one month action plan starting July 2<sup>nd</sup> with a radio program at ADO FM sensitizing young people on the practical steps to follow in Reproduction Health. Five thousands (5000) young people listened to that program.



The second step of their plan was a conference at the ACC targeting journalists and young leaders, with the purpose of using them to relay the contents of the law against the discrimination of people living with HIV AIDS. The event was highly successful with lots of media coverage.



# July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## CONFERENCE ON LEARNING & TEACHING BY ALUMNUS PROFESSOR DÉsirÉ BALOUBI



On July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011, PAS Cotonou hosted a conference at the American Cultural Center (ACC) directed by Fulbright alumnus Professor Désiré Baloubi, Chair Professor of English & Linguistic at Shaw University in North Carolina. The theme of the conference was: "Teaching and Learning in the Information age: sharing my American experience."



Many professors from public and private universities, as well as from secondary schools took part in this conference. They learned a great deal about pedagogic methods used in the USA to teach students and how the purpose of teaching is actually to ensure that the learners have indeed learned something.

# July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## GENERAL HOGG'S SECOND VISIT



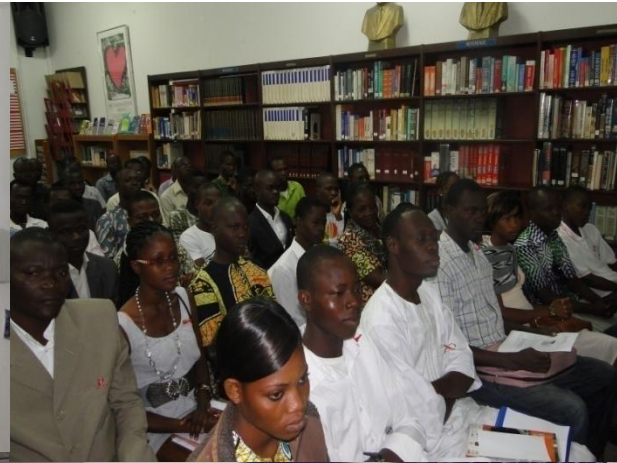
On Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 PAS Cotonou covered General David Hogg's second visit to Benin. He was greeted at the Cotonou Airport by Susan Tuller, Deputy Chief of Mission, and by Mackenzie Rowe, Political & Military Officer. He then graciously made a brief statement with the press and answered some questions. He came for the purpose of strengthening the bilateral relation between the USA and Benin.





**July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# USA EDUCATION PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION SESSION



On July 20, 2011 in the Library Kennedy-King of the American Cultural Center, PAS Cotonou held the USA Education Pre-Departure Orientation Session. This was an excellent opportunity for prospective students desiring to study in the U.S. A. to listen to the Educational Adviser sharing the insights of the procedures to follow when planning to travel to the U.S. for studies purposes. The Cultural Affairs Assistant shared the various scholarship programs available. The students were able to view a very instructive video on the testimonials of other students who are currently studying in the United States. Finally, some alumni and an American intern working at the ACC shared their experiences of living in the U.S.A. The event was a great success with a large turnout of students.

# July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## TUESDAY DREAM ENTREPRENEURS CLUB MEET FOR THEIR GENERAL ASSEMBLY



The Executive Bureau of Tuesday Dream Entrepreneurs Club gave account in front of a general assembly of members on how they have managed the club since they have been elected one year ago. The Bureau showed that they understood about the principles of good governance and democratic process.

This is a very encouraging result because most associations fails to abide by this simple rule of governance:  
Accountability.

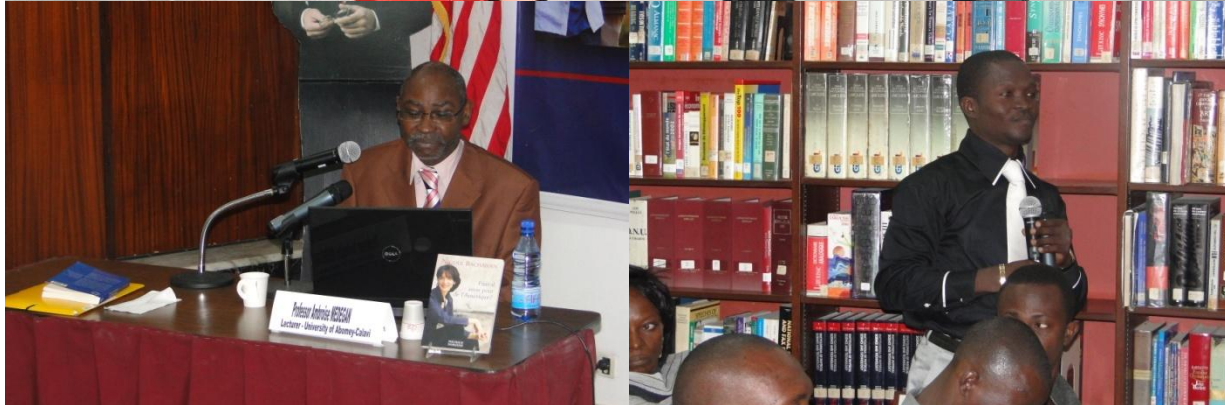


**July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## BOOK DISCUSSION ON “FAUT-IL AVOIR PEUR DE L'AMERIQUE ?”



On July 27, Professor Ambroise Medegan, Lecturer at the University of Abomey-Calavi and currently a Technical Adviser at the High Court of Justice, was the guest speaker at the book discussion on the book: “FAUT-IL AVOIR PEUR DE L'AMERIQUE ?” (i.e. shall one be afraid of America?).



Around 100 people were exposed to facts that show America and its values. This activity helped maintain support for the USA.

**PAS COTONOU**  
**AUGUST, 2011**



# August 4<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## SERIES OF VISITS AT VARIOUS MEDIA OUTLETS BY INFORMATION OFFICER ALEXIS WOLFF



From August 4<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, Information Officer Alexis Wolff visited a series of media outlets. It was an opportunity for the newly arrived Information officer to introduce herself to the various media partners of the American Cultural Center. The visits were also the occasion to strengthen the good relationship that the US Mission has with the Beninese Media.

**August 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKSHOP IN COTONOU



One thousand and two hundred people took part in a 3 days workshop organized by PAS Cotonou on Entrepreneurship. It was an opportunity for all these youths to be empowered about starting their own businesses.



# August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT OBAMA FESTIVAL BEACH



On August 12, PAS Cotonou organized a giant concert at Obama Festival Beach in celebration of the International Day of Young people. Young artists, , young Beninese leaders all came to express their visions about how young people can positively contribute to the development of Benin. It was also the occasion for the Red Ribbon Campaign leaders to close their campaign with the video highlighting their activities.

**August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011**

# DEBRIEFING SESSION WITH AMERICAN FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR



Fulbright scholar Beatriz Zengotitabengoa presented her nine months research work in the Kingdom Nikki in Benin. Her work focused on the Bariba Art and Culture, and how art objects and instruments contribute in effective cultural and sacred communication within the Kingdom.



# August 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## PROGRAM WITH NAVY BAND ACCOMPANYING HSV-2-SWIFT IN BENIN

Touring the cities of Cotonou, Ouidah, Porto-Novo, Abomey-Calavi, the members of the Navy Band accompanying the HSV-2-SWIFT performed a variety of American musical rhythms that filled the heart of all the listeners with joy. The last performances were done featuring Beninese Army Orchestra.





**August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# BOOK DISCUSSION ON “MES CONSEILS POUR REUSSIR”



A discussion on the book “Mes Conseils pour réussir” (i.e. Winning) by the author Jack Welch, was conducted by Mr. Emmanuel Guidibi, CEO of the firm Afrique Conseils, a Cotonou based consulting cabinet. This was a follow-up of the Entrepreneurship workshop organized earlier in the month.



**August 31<sup>st</sup> to September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011**

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKSHOP IN PORTO-NOVO



Five hundred people took part in a 3 days Entrepreneurship workshop organized by PAS in Porto-Novo, the capital city of Benin. It was a follow-up to the Cotonou workshop and an opportunity for all these youths to be empowered about starting their own businesses.

**PAS COTONOU**  
**SEPTEMBER**  
**2011**



# September 1st, 2011

## FIRST ENTREPRENEURSHIP CORNER IN BENIN



The City Council of Porto Novo offered to grant space to the ACC for the creation of an Entrepreneurship Corner and an English Lab on the premises of the newly built Youth Convention Center. The Council asked the PAO to assist in ensuring that the two spaces follow the model of American spaces. This Entrepreneurship Corner offers an opportunity for young people to receive adequate training and guidance in the creation of their own businesses and to become fluent English speakers.



# September 09<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## 9/11 COMMEMORATIVE BLOOD DRIVE



The DCM, PAO and IO gave opening remarks at a blood drive organized by the Mission to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11. The activity allowed the Mission to engage the public and the press in a discussion around the theme of resilience as it relates to 9/11.

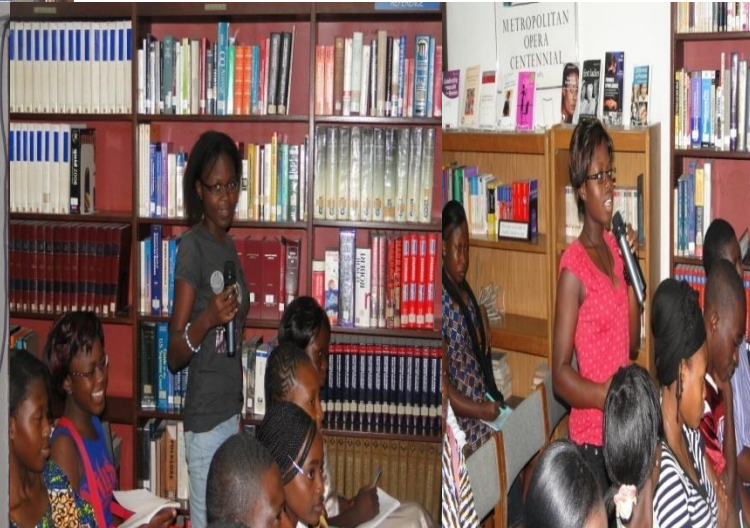


**September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# BOOK DISCUSSION OF ARS NOUVEAUX TITLE "A BORD DU MAYFLOWER"



IRC Cotonou hosted a book discussion conducted by Secondary school students. This was an application of the IRC advocacy program towards high school students.



Through this activity, newly registered students to the library started exploring IRC resources, learned about American history and discussed lessons they can apply to their own life.



# September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## A GROUP OF 54 NEW PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS SWORN IN BENIN



In the framework of the Mission Strategic Plan of "Benin maintains strong support for the United States of America" and must be assisted, PD organized this activity to inform the general public of the arrival of a new group of Peace Corps Volunteers who need everyone's cooperation in carrying out their assignment, in the interest of the Beninese nation.



**September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# EDUCATION USA FAIR: STUDY IN THE USA



The study in the US fair is an annual event organized by PAS Cotonou to mark the beginning of a new academic year at the EducationUSA Advising Center and inform the public of various opportunities available for them to further higher education in the US. The Event attracted 250 students and parents.

# September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## ACC ORGANIZED USG ALUMNI DAY



With the recruitment of Mrs. Fanta Tidjani, USG Alumni Coordinator, the interaction between the ACC and USG alumni (IVLP, Humphrey and Fulbright) has become more dynamic. To strengthen the relation between the US Mission and the alumni, the ACC organized the USG Alumni Day with the participation of prominent alumni .



**September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOP BY SUSAN STRAND



RSELF Susan Strand led a four-day training workshop for approximately 45 English teachers. The purpose was to share current strategies in English language methodology with teachers and enhance the learning experience for their students. Critical thinking strategies play a vital role for engaging students and helping them to develop into responsible learners and active citizens.



**September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011**

# FURNITURE DONATION AT ABOMEY ORPHANAGE



PAS Cotonou covered a furniture donation at an orphanage in the city of Abomey. The U.S. Embassy helped build a room and donated tables and chairs to the orphanage.



**September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011**

# YOUNG BENINESE WOMEN LEADERS RECEIVE SMALL GRANTS



PAS Cotonou funded two additional Young African Women Leaders projects: Fadeyi Florentine will fight child trafficking, and Larissa Byll-Cataria will help HIV-positive women obtain necessary treatment and prevent transmission to their children.



The Young African Women Leaders Forum Small Grants Program selection committee in Washington, D.C. awarded Joannie Bewa and Irene Mensah - of the Young Beninese Leaders Association - a grant to empower women through a series of entrepreneurship conferences and workshops.

**September 26<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# EDUCATION USA FAIR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABOMEY-CALAVI



The Educational Advising Center animated a Study-in-the-US stand at the University of Abomey Calavi. This activity was organized as part of the Abomey Calavi University Cooperation week, to present the US as the Number One destination for higher education worldwide and provide students, researchers and lecturers with accurate information on opportunities to study in the USA.



**September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# BOOK DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC "COMMENT CHANGER LE MONDE"



As a follow-up of the Presidential Forum with Young African Leaders, PAS Cotonou organized on the book entitled "How to change the world" to raise public awareness on the fact that to develop Africa, private initiatives must be taken to supplement government's efforts. The key message was: government cannot do it alone; the role of the private sector is crucial

**PAS COTONOU**  
**OCTOBER, 2011**



# October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE NIGHT: STARTUP



PAS Cotonou re-launched the weekly film program for the season with a viewing of the documentary *Startup.com*, which complemented the successful entrepreneurship workshops the PAS held recently in Cotonou, Parakou, Porto Novo and Bohicon. The PAO gave opening remarks and moderated a discussion in English after the film.

# October 19th, 2011

## BOOK DISCUSSION



The PAS Cotonou hosted a book discussion entitled, "Les pays pauvres: sont-ils condamnés à le rester?" (The Elusive Quest for Growth). The Information Officer, Alexis Wolff gave welcoming remarks, followed by a speech from the Consular Associate, Andrew Holtz. This monthly program both promotes literacy and presents an opportunity to discuss pressing topics such as development and capacity building. It also introduces participants to the IRC and its resources.





# October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE NIGHT: “TOY STORY I”



“Toy Story I” was screened as part of the PAS's weekly English language film series. The film was followed by a discussion, in English.

This program allows the PAS to reach new and youth audiences, as well as to promote the English language in Benin.



# October 20th, 2011

## USA EDUCATION OUTREACH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABOMEY CALAVI



On October 20, 2011, The Educational Advisor traveled to the University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin's largest public university, to inform students about advising services offered by the PAS as well as fellowship opportunities. He also focused in the importance of English language skills. This activity helps promote the English language in Benin and also helps maintain Beninese support for the U.S. Additionally, it advertised PAS resources.



# October 20, 2011

## TRAINING SEMINAR



PAS Cotonou -- in collaboration with a local NGO called 2M (pour un Monde Meilleur) -- organized and executed a seminar on personal development. The speaker, Fidele Adjovi, is an expert in communication and a member of the Junior Chamber Benin Chapter. He lectured the crowd and led a lively question and answer session focused on taking control of one's own future.

# October 20, 2011

## IVLP ALUMNUS DEBRIEFING



Following a personal development conference in the morning, Charles Vidjannagni, the Benin's delegate to the "Young African Leaders: Inspiring Leadership and Civil Society Engagement" IVL program had debriefed the crowd. Despite being orphaned at the age of nine, he became an accomplished consultant and entrepreneur.



# October 25, 2011

## CONFERENCE CALL FOR JOURNALISTS



The PAS hosted journalists for a conference call with the AF Media Hub about the Diversity Visa lottery and application process. After the call, Consular Associate Andrew Holtz highlighted some of the most important points for applicants in Benin.

# October 26, 2011

## TRAINING SESSION FOR AFRICA-TIC MEMBERS



The IRC Director conducted a training session with the members of the NGO, Africa TIC Emploi. The training covered Internet, Internet services, web directories, search engines, social media tools, and IRC resources like commercial databases and the eLibraryUSA.



# October 26, 2011

## ACADEMIC ORIENTATION SESSION



The Academic Advisor at PAS Cotonou held an Orientation Session on “studying in the US”. This is part of a weekly program which is animated by the Academic Advisor and the Alumni Coordinator to brief prospective students on the various the topic of studying in the U.S.

# October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE NIGHT: “TOY STORY II”



“Toy Story II” was screened as part of the PAS's weekly English language film series. The film was followed by a discussion, in English. Providing a popular movie free of charge helps maintain Beninese support for the United States. Furthermore, the English language screening and subsequent discussion promotes the English language in Benin.



# October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE HIV AIDS DAY 2011



Program Support Specialist, Romaric Mouftaou and Alumni Coordinator, Fanta Tidjani, met with a group of ten young leaders to discuss about the preparations of the HIV AIDS DAY. A timetable was elaborated with the goal to screen 5000 students on the campus of the University of Abomey-Calavi and its surrounding schools.



**PAS COTONOU**  
**NOVEMBER**  
**2011**



# November 03<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## CONFERENCE ON LEARNING & TEACHING BY ALUMNUS PROFESSOR DÉsirÉ BALOUBI



Bienvenu Olory, President of the Association of Humphrey and Fulbright Alumni in Benin, stopped by the American Cultural Center with a group of about a dozen American students who are studying in Ghana. They were in Cotonou for several days and wanted to ask about Beninese culture and the USG's work in Benin. The IO, Cultural Affairs Assistant, Educational Advisor and IRC Director hosted them for a short question and answer session.

# November 03<sup>rd</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE NIGHT: “TOY STORY III”



“Toy Story III” was screened as part of the PAS's weekly English language film series. The film was followed by a discussion, in English.

This program allows the PAS to reach new and youth audiences, as well as to promote the English language in Benin.





**November 04<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# HIV AIDS DAY: VOLUNTEERS MEETING



The Information Officer, the Program Support Specialist, the Cultural Affairs Assistant, and the President of NGO AFRICA TIC Emploi met with more than 60 leaders of students associations and unions at the University of Abomey-Calavi. The goal was to mobilize the group for the upcoming HIV/AIDS screening campaign to be held on campus as part of World AIDS Day festivities.

# November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## TRAINING OF HIV AIDS DAY VOLUNTEERS



The PAS oversaw a training session for student volunteers involved with the HIV/AIDS screening campaign. They learned facts about HIV/AIDS and received advice about how to share information with fellow students. This activity aims to create a corps of student volunteers who are mobilized to work towards an AIDS-free generation. It also falls in line with the Mission's objective of promoting access to good primary healthcare.



# November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MEETING ABOUT WOMEN IN BUSINESS PANEL



The IO, accompanied by the Program Support Specialist and the Alumni Coordinator, met with three alumni who will be panelists at the PAS's upcoming Global Entrepreneurship Week event. This meeting helped the PAS move forward in planning an event that targets youth, women and entrepreneurs -- all important demographics for the PAS.

# November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK



On November 14, 2011, PAS launched its International Education Week program. More than 1000 students in total were reached out to during that week. Following welcoming remarks by IO Alexis Wolff, approximately 250 students watched a documentary film titled "Visa Etudiant," about life as an international student. Then the Educational Advisor spoke about the logistics of preparing to study in the United States.



**November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## TUESDAY DREAM MEETING



Young entrepreneurs from the Tuesday Dream were taught how to make a business out of wrapping gifts. The room was full of curious entrepreneurs eager to get any tip that can help them increase their revenues.

# November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

## AMBASSADOR LAUNCHES GLOBAL THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK (GEW)



The PAS arranged for Ambassador Knight to be the keynote speaker at the launching ceremony of Global Entrepreneurship Week, which is being organized in Benin by State alum Charles Vidjannagni. Supporting entrepreneurship addresses the Mission goal of helping Benin maintain or improve its economic growth rate. Furthermore, the PAS assisted Mr. Vidjannagni in organizing the event in order to mentor and empower this IVLP alum to be a prominent young leader.





# November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

## GEW: WOMEN IN BUSINESS PANEL DISCUSSION



As part of Global Entrepreneurship Week, the PAS arranged a panel discussion featuring five prominent female entrepreneurs. Following opening remarks from the Information Officer and the Ambassador, the women briefly introduces themselves and then took questions from the audience. Topics coverage were overcoming obstacles, dealing with sexual harassment, persistence, mentorship, etc.



# November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

## GEW: ACC SUPPORTS LOCAL ORGANIZER OF GLOBAL EDUCATION WEEK



The PAS offered the ACC as a venue to State alum Charles Vidjannagni, the local organizer of GEW festivities. Following welcoming remarks by the Information Officer and the Ambassador, the Minister of Decentralization gave a speech about the importance of entrepreneurship to communities. Then a consultant spoke about mistakes to avoid when starting a business.





# November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## PAO RECEIVES 1ST GEW CITIZENSHIP AWARD



PAO Rhonda Watson received the first Global Entrepreneurship Week Citizenship Award for her continued efforts supporting entrepreneurship in Benin. The Program Support Specialist, Romaric Mouftaou, collected the award on behalf of the PAO who was on leave. The award was presented during the closing ceremony of Global Entrepreneurship Week.

**November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CONFERENCE**



The PAS offered the ACC as a venue to State alum The PAS hosted a conference as part of the "16 Days Campaign." Follow a screening of a short documentary about gender-based violence, the Information Officer and Management Officer, representing the Ambassador, welcomed the crowd. Three speakers took the stage to speak about the current state of gender-based violence in the country.





# November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MARITIME SECURITY MEETING



The PAS covered a maritime security meeting held between the U.S. and the Benin militaries officials. This was an opportunity to strengthen the bilateral relation between both countries and to help Benin naval forces to fight much efficiently the increasing attacks of pirates on the sea of Benin.

# November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE PROGRAM: AGE OF AIDS



The PAS covered a  
As part of the  
weekly English  
language film  
series, PAS Cotonou  
screened the  
documentary, The  
Age of AIDS, timed  
to coincide with  
World AIDS Day.  
Webmaster  
Tafamba KPANDJA  
led a discussion in  
English after the  
film.



**PAS COTONOU**  
**DECEMBER**  
**2011**

# December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

## WORLD AIDS DAY: FASHION SHOW AND PRESENTATION FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



The American Cultural Center focused its World AIDS Day programming on students at the University of Abomey-Calavi, the largest public university.

A fashion show demonstrated that it's impossible to tell from appearances who does and does not have HIV/AIDS. Then a presentation and Q&Q session with several experts gave the students the opportunity to clear up their misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. The Ambassador and PAO also spoke to the crowd.



# December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

## COCKTAIL FOR CIAMO AT AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE



The Ambassador and his wife hosted a cocktail reception at their residence for about 150 artists and supporters of the arts in order to demonstrate the Embassy's commitment to cultural activities. The Embassy uses this opportunity to strengthen its relationship with and promote the work of the International Center for Arts and Music of Ouidah (CIAMO). CIAMO was founded by the American philanthropist Sarah Dupont.

# December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

## USAID TEACHERS' AWARDS CEREMONY



PAS Cotonou arranged for press coverage of a USAID event honoring teachers at which Ambassador Knight spoke. Information Assistant Laurent Adjogan accompanied reporters to the event. Afterwards, PAS Cotonou released a press release and photo to other media contacts who were not able to attend. Securing press coverage of Mission activities helps maintain Beninese support for the U.S.



# December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## USAID AIDS AWARENESS EVENT



PAS Cotonou assisted USAID with press coverage for the closing ceremony of a five-year campaign aimed to educate men and women in uniform about HIV/AIDS. The ceremony was held at the police headquarters, and the Ambassador and USAID Country Director attended. Information Assistant Laurent Adjogan accompanied members of the press to the event, and the PAS distributed a press release with photo after the event.

# December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE PROGRAM: THE LARAMIE PROJECT



As a prelude to the December 10 Human Rights Day, the American Cultural Center projected the film, "The Laramie Project" as part of its regular Wednesday evening film series. The movie tells the story of the aftermath of the 1998 murder of gay university student Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming. Homosexuality remains taboo in Benin, and this event gave participants the opportunity to re-think their own discriminatory attitudes towards homosexuality. In the discussion after the film, participants said that this film helped them to realize that all people should be treated with dignity.



# December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## USAID AIDS AWARENESS EVENT



PAS Cotonou assisted USAID with press coverage for the closing ceremony of a five-year campaign aimed to educate men and women in uniform about HIV/AIDS. The ceremony was held at the police headquarters, and the Ambassador and USAID Country Director attended. Information Assistant Laurent Adjogan accompanied members of the press to the event, and the PAS distributed a press release with photo after the event.

# December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## BUILDING ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



In commemoration of Human Rights Day, the American Cultural Center hosted a conference with Beninese lawmakers on the issue of the rights of access of people with disabilities. Both the PAO and the Ambassador gave speeches emphasizing the need to institute legal protections in Benin so that buildings would be required to make accommodations to provide access disabled persons so that they would be able to contribute fully as active citizens in society.



**December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## VISIT OF THE REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ADVISING COORDINATOR IN BENIN



The Regional Educational Advising Coordinator, Nancy Keteku met with Education Advisor, Ulrich Demagbo and Alumni Coordinator, Fanta Tidjani. After their meeting, the REAC had the opportunity to exchange with a group of prospective students desiring to study in the USA.

# December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## DEBRIEFING CONFERENCE BY IVLP ALUMNI ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP INNOVATION



Upon return from the US, where they respectively attended the African Women Entrepreneurship Program and the New Beginning: Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation, Ms. Alida Ahouandjinou, Technical Director and Quality Control Officer at DETAREN (production of water enriched with essential oils) and Ms. Naffissatou Ligali, Founder and Manager of a chain of supermarkets, spoke to a packed audience of over 400 people at the American Cultural Center on December 14, 2011, to report on their professional experience in the US and how it has impacted them.



# December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## USAID 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT



PAS Cotonou arranged for press coverage of USAID's reception in honor of 20 years of existence in Benin and 50 years of existence globally. Information Officer Alexis Wolff escorted TV and print journalists to the event. After the event PAS Cotonou distributed a press release with photo to all media contacts.

# December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## ACC PARTICIPATES AT A JOB FAIR



PAO Rhonda J. Watson gave remarks at the opening ceremony of the Salon de l'entrepreneuriat, a job fair that was organized to connect young job seekers with businesses in need of personnel. The PAO shared with the audience tips on the mistakes to avoid when going for a job interview, i.e. the dress code, the time, the research about the company, etc.



# December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## MOVIE PROGRAM: LITTLE WOMEN



As part of its weekly English language film series, PAS Cotonou screened Little Women at the Kennedy-King American Library. IMS Shirpaul McLaughlin welcomed the crowd. After the film she led a discussion, giving audience members the opportunity to learn about American culture and practice their English skills. The conversation focused on the importance of family, both in the United States and in Benin.

# December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## SCHOOL VISITS THE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER



The Public Affairs Officer, Rhonda J. Watson, welcomed eighty five students from "The Champions" school during their recent visit to the American Cultural Center (ACC). The students, aged 5-16 years, were given information about all the services and programs offered by the ACC. They were also encouraged to take their English lessons seriously if they wish to study in the U.S. or apply for an American exchange program one day.



**December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

# GLOBAL YOUTH INNOVATION NETWORK MEETING



A digital video conference was held December 20, 2011 at the American Cultural Center in Cotonou. The purpose of this DVC meeting was to renew ties between the Global Youth Innovation Network (GYIN) ambassadors from Benin, Senegal and Mali, and establish an interconnection between the GYIN and the Young African Leaders Network (YAL). It was decided that the GYIN and YAL will share information, links, experiences and activities of each network through their websites and or Facebook pages.

# December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## TRAINING FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS



From December 27 to 30, 2011, PAS Cotonou hosted a four-day workshop for 54 English teachers on the topic "Materials development and lesson preparation." The workshop was conducted by Susan Strand, Regional Senior English Language Fellow for West Africa. The program concluded with a certificate ceremony attended by Ambassador James Knight.



**December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## IVLP ALUMNI GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING



The American Cultural Center hosted the inaugural meeting of the IVLP Alumni General Assembly on December 27, 2011. In her opening remarks, PAO Rhonda Watson encouraged the alumni to work together in order to effectively use their experiences in the U.S to advance the goal of furthering the development of Benin. She also encouraged them to maintain a collaborative relationship with the U.S Mission in Benin. The meeting was conducted by the founders of the new IVLP Alumni Association, Dr. Satoguina Judith, Mr. Benjamin Dako, Executive Secretary at the High Commission for Good Governance at the Presidency and Mr. Edou Raphael, Minister of Decentralization and Local Governance.